

# IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

January 11, 2001, 9:00 a.m.-4 p.m.

## NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES PORTLAND, OREGON

### *I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.*

The January 11, 2001 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The agenda for the January 11 meeting and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov).

Silverberg welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

### *II. Updates.*

**A. In-Season Management.** Brian Brown said that, as expected, the new BiOp was signed in December. With the new BiOp in place and the new year beginning, said Brown, I wanted to announce that I am appointing Jim Ruff the new IT chair, effective with today's meeting. Ruff thanked Brown for his many contributions in pulling the Regional Forum together, and the dedication and leadership he has shown in his last five years with the IT. I hope I can carry on as well as he has, said Ruff.

ODFW's Christine Mallette, the new FPAC chair, then updated the IT on recent TMT activities, beginning with current system conditions. At the most recent TMT meeting, several model runs were presented, all focusing on Grand Coulee elevations and flows below Bonneville

Dam during the winter period, Mallette said. We also reviewed the status of chum spawning below Bonneville Dam; NMFS proposed that Bonneville outflow be reduced, and the project managed to a tailwater elevation of 11.7 feet. The fisheries agencies would prefer a higher tailwater elevation at that project, said Mallette; some action agencies would prefer a lower tailwater elevation. The decision was made to operate to a tailwater elevation of 11.7 feet, with a follow-up conference call scheduled for next Wednesday to discuss the status of the operation and of the redds.

At last Wednesday's TMT meeting, we also heard presentations from the River Forecast Center on how they develop their forecast information, and from CRITFC on climate change and its anticipated effects on weather conditions over the next several months, said Mallette. There were some conflicts between these presentations; CRITFC made some suggestions about how the system should be operated, which the TMT will be discussing over the next several meetings. We also deferred the discussion of the 2001 Water Management Plan, Mallette said; the decision to defer this item was made because people need a greater understanding of how the one- and five-year plans called for in the BiOp will be incorporated into the Water Management Plan.

The concern is that we're currently drafting Grand Coulee at a rate of one foot per day, said Jim Nielsen; the base flow needed to support both regional power load and a minimum Bonneville tailwater elevation of 11.7 feet is about 130 Kcfs. The problem, of course, is that the January final water supply forecast is predicting an 80 MAF runoff at The Dalles in 2001, 76% of average. Flow at Bonneville was 129 Kcfs on Tuesday, so it appears that they will be able to save a bit of water by operating to the 11.7-foot tailwater elevation, Nielsen said. Mallette added that one Corps model run showed that Grand Coulee would be at elevation 1261, 22 feet below the project's flood control elevation, on April 30 if 130 Kcfs outflow is maintained at Bonneville through the winter. However, she said, there was significant variation between the various model runs presented.

What would be the implications of dropping the flow at Bonneville? John Palensky asked. We will be dewatering redds, Nielsen replied; at a tailwater elevation of 11.7 feet, at least some of the redds will be dewatered. In response to a question from Jim Fodrea, Nielsen said there is some evidence that chum emergence may already have begun; field crews are attempting to sample for sac fry, but there are no results to share at this time.

NMFS is very concerned about this situation, said Ruff; we're in the difficult position of having to balance the needs of one ESU against the needs of multiple other ESUs, in an extremely poor water year. We want to refill as much as possible, in order to protect the upstream ESUs, some of which are in very poor shape, he said; we would also like to protect the chum to the greatest extent possible. There are only two years where we have started January with such a poor snowpack; in 1970, we started January with 27% of average snowpack and ended up at 89%. In 1981, we started with 30% of average snowpack and ended at 81% of average. In 1966, said Ruff, we got to 96% of normal snowpack by the end of April, after starting January at 31% of normal. In 1977, however, the January snowpack was about what it is

now, then got worse.

Looking at the long-term climate forecast, the current prediction is for average precipitation for the next three months, Ruff said – in other words, the chances are very slim that we will be able to achieve a normal snowpack between now and the end of April – hence NMFS' recommendation that we operate Bonneville to a tailwater elevation of 11.7 feet. It would be very helpful if we could have an idea of where the redds are and how many will be dewatered if we operate to a lower tailwater elevation, he said. That model is being developed, but will not be available for use until next year, Nielsen replied. In the meantime, we're relying on field observations to guide the tailwater elevations at Bonneville, he added.

In response to a question, Nielsen said the salmon managers are concerned because there is no guarantee that any water saved by operating Bonneville to a lower tailwater elevation will still be available for use in spring and summer flow augmentation – if a power system emergency arises, the action agencies will have to release more water to meet load, he said.

Jim Yost said Idaho is very concerned about refill this year; the state has ordered its power companies not to release water to generate excess power for sale. They can meet the firm load needs of the people in Idaho, but other than that, we're going to try to save as much water as we can for refill, said Yost. He noted that Idaho isn't extremely concerned that Dworshak may not completely refill, since it hasn't completely refilled in either of the past two years; however, we would like to see it get as full as possible, he said. We're all concerned about refill at the Idaho projects, said Ruff.

So NMFS is supporting a reduction in Bonneville flow to facilitate refill? Yost asked. That's correct, Ruff replied – we want to increase the probability that Grand Coulee will refill this year. So you have made a conscious decision to reduce flows, said Yost, even though that will damage listed fish, and despite the fact that, in the past, NMFS has asked Idaho to increase Dworshak outflow to reduce Snake River water temperature, even though there is no evidence that not doing so would kill fish, said Yost. That's the same argument Idaho has made in the past, so I wanted to be clear about that.

To be clear, Ruff replied, we are trying to refill so that we have as much water as possible available for spring and summer fish – we feel that's where the greatest biological benefit lies. We can discuss that information later in the year, said Yost; Idaho will try to show that NMFS' data isn't as accurate as it could be. In general, said Yost, I'm encouraged by this turn of events.

***B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB).*** No ISAB report was presented at today's meeting.

***C. Water Quality Team (WQT).*** Mark Schneider reminded the group that, several months ago, Mike Schneider of the Corps' Waterways Experiment Station had given the IT a presentation his on his SYSTDG mainstem water temperature model. Following that

presentation, he said, Schneider was asked when the model might be available for use as a management tool. We're now at a point when we have scheduled two SYSTDG training workshops here at Bonneville, on February 27-28 and March 6-7, said Schneider; he asked any agencies interested in receiving training in the model to contact him directly at 503/231-2306.

***D. System Configuration Team (SCT).*** No SCT report was presented at today's meeting.

***E. Qualitative Analytical Report (QAR).*** No QAR report was presented at today's meeting.

### ***3. Columbia River Mainstem TMDL.***

Mary Lou Soscia distributed a pair of handouts, a TMDL fact sheet (Enclosure C) and a description of the TMDL process as it will apply to the Columbia and Snake River mainstems. She spent a few minutes going through the latter document; please see Enclosure D for details of her presentation. Soscia noted that the geographic bounds of the TMDL will be the Columbia River from the Canadian border down to the Astoria Bridge, and the Snake River up to its confluence with the Salmon River.

Soscia also touched on the statutory and regulatory basis for the TMDL; the applicable Clean Water Act requirements, the TMDL implementation process, why TMDLs are important, applicable water quality standards, 303 (d) lists, submittal elements and analysis considerations, the scope of the TMDL, Columbia/Snake River 303 (d) listings for temperature, and applicable Idaho, Oregon, Washington and tribal water quality criteria.

Soscia said she is proposing that the NMFS Regional Forum, in particular, the Water Quality Team, be used to share information about the TMDL development process; EPA will also be organizing a series of one-on-one meetings with various regional stakeholders, particularly as important decision point are reached in the development process. The goal is to complete the TMDL for both the Snake and Columbia Rivers by the end of 2001; Soscia said it is likely that it will be necessary to extend that deadline to December 2002. She added that there will be a formal comment process once the TMDL is completed. Oregon and Idaho have already signed the TMDL agreement; Washington is expected to sign it by January 24.

In general, Soscia said, EPA is committed to working as collaboratively as possible with all of the regional stakeholders, from the federal action agencies to the states and tribes to industry groups, to develop this TMDL. It's a big task, she said; we're taking it very seriously, and we want to work as closely as possible with everyone who may be affected by the TMDL.

How will you coordinate the flows and other operations called for in the TMDL with the measures required by the BiOp? Jim Litchfield asked. The BiOp includes a water quality plan, Soscia replied; we're meeting regularly with NMFS, the Corps and the other action agencies to talk about their responsibilities under the TMDL. Ruff agreed, noting that a major part of the

BiOp water quality plan will be the implementation of the measures required under the TMDL. He added that NMFS supports the use of the Water Quality Team as the forum for information-sharing about the TMDL development.

How will any conflicts between the ESA and the CWA be resolved, given the multiple conflicts that already occur about how the available water should be used? Litchfield asked. That has been a major topic of conversation, Soscia said; our respective attorneys got together, and attempted to at least describe how we could move forward on that issue. That description can be found in Appendix B of the Biological Opinion, she said; basically, it describes our long-standing commitment to solving that problem. Rick Parkin, EPA's lead on the TMDL development, can be reached at 206/553-8574, although Soscia requested that anyone with questions contact her first.

#### ***4. NMFS 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion.***

Brown distributed Enclosure E, the table of contents and key excerpts from the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion. He began by noting that John Palensky had sent out a memo a week ago, asking what people would like to have NMFS focus on during today's briefing; the only response he received was a question from Jim Nielsen about water quality variances associated with the spill program. Are there other particular areas people would like to discuss today? he asked. Yost said he would like to have some discussion of the one- and five-year implementation plans; Bill Hevlin suggested that Brown also touch on the performance standards included in the new BiOp.

Brown drew the group's attention to Enclosure E, which he said essentially constitutes an executive summary of the BiOp. With respect to the substantive changes included in the final BiOp, Brown said he would venture to say that, between draft and final, there were few substantive changes in the measures themselves. In the hydro area and the offsite mitigation areas, the measures were tweaked, strengthened and clarified, but the actions themselves were not substantially changed or added to, he said.

One change is that the Upper Snake projects were withdrawn from the final BiOp, to allow the Snake River Adjudication process to run its course, said Brown. Those projects will eventually be the subject of a separate consultation process and BiOp, which should be completed prior to the 2001 irrigation season. The other area of major change was in the jeopardy standard itself, notably in the metrics used to define success and failure and to trigger additional actions, Brown said. Much of the criticism we received was centered on our willingness to accept a high level of risk, as well as on the CRI analysis itself. We put a fair amount of effort into modifying, explaining and describing the changes we did and did not make, Brown said; in some cases we included the results from secondary analyses so that people could compare. We also dropped the full mitigation standard from the jeopardy standard, he said.

Did you add a three-year checkpoint? Bruce Lovelin asked. That was actually in the July

draft, but it wasn't as fully-integrated into the text as the five- and eight-year tests, Brown said. We corrected that lack of integration in the final draft. At the last IT meeting, you provided copies of some of the individual agencies' comments on the draft BiOp, said Christine Mallette; any sense of when NMFS' response to those comments will be available? NMFS does not intend to respond to each individual comment, Brown replied; some of those responses are included in the text of the BiOp itself. We also provided a 30-page response document, summarizing the key issues raised by the various commentors, when the final BiOp was released on December 21. That's all we plan to do, said Brown, although I would make the offer that if any of the organizations who provided comments feel one of their key comments has not been addressed, they can bring their concerns to the IT for further discussion. Ruff added that NMFS' response to comments document is available via the NMFS website. Brown cited the example of section 9.2.2.1, found on pages 9-8 and 9-9 of Enclosure E, as an illustration of how NMFS responded to comments within the body of the BiOp.

On Page 9-26, Brown continued, we describe the process for developing the one- and five-year implementation plans. This is, in essence, the process this group will be expected to manage; the specific plans to be developed include the following:

1. Hydrosystem Plan
2. Operations – Water Management Plan
3. Configuration – Capital Investment Plan
4. Water Quality Improvement Plan
5. Operations and Maintenance Plan
6. Offsite Mitigation – Habitat Plan
7. Offsite Mitigation – Hatcheries and Harvest Plans
8. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
9. Tribal Coordination on Hydro and Offsite Mitigation Actions
10. Recovery Planning
11. Unanticipated Actions
12. Approval of Plans
13. Annual Progress Reports

Brown discussed the TMT's role in developing the Operations -- Water Management Plan, as well as its role in long-term planning. He noted that Page 9-38 lays out the schedule for one- and five-year plan development; under this schedule, the first five-year implementation plans are due in March of this year.

Brown noted that NMFS is increasing its involvement in the Council and CBFWA processes in order to use them as the forums for the development of the offsite mitigation implementation plans. Basically, we want to ensure that the offsite mitigation actions that are approved under those processes are adequate to meet the offsite mitigation needs identified in the BiOp, he said. Idaho is concerned about the limited membership of CBFWA, said Yost; if that is going to be the only forum that approves offsite mitigation priorities and activities, then Idaho

has a concern with that. CBFWA isn't the only arena for offsite mitigation, said Palensky; NMFS reserves the right to go directly to the Council or to BPA if necessary. Idaho will likely take the same approach, said Yost.

In terms of significant upcoming actions, there are two things that will occur simultaneously in the next nine months, said Brown: the designation of high-priority projects to be added to the 2001 funding package through the Council process, and second, the development of the initial five-year implementation plans. The intent of those plans is to provide guidance to the Council process about what the federal action agencies intend to fund in 2002, Brown explained – we want to get those out on the table as the 2002 Council plan is being developed.

What do you see as the role of the IT in this process? Lovelin asked. There has been a clear indication that this committee doesn't intend to get involved in the funding process to any large degree, said Brown; instead, we intend that existing processes be used to the greatest extent possible. In other words, he said, I don't see the IT playing the role of approving implementation plans. That being said, said Brown, the first year of the process is likely to be fairly dynamic, and all of the participating entities will be re-evaluating their respective roles as the process evolves. It may be that NMFS will see a need to have some further discussion with the states and tribes to ensure that all of the measures called for in the BiOp are being met.

Yost said he has some concerns about the action agencies' ability to effect an implementation plan; the federal agencies are limited about what they can do in Idaho, for example. It may be necessary to negotiate with state agencies to get certain things implemented on the ground, he said. Funding is also a concern, assuming that there isn't another pot of money that has been developed for offsite mitigation. If that funding is going to come out of the fish and wildlife budget of CBFWA and the Council, that is going to generate some serious discussion, said Yost. Nielsen said Washington shares some of Idaho's concerns; in the event that dam breaching becomes necessary, for example, it's pretty obvious that substantial additional funds will be needed.

Dan Daley replied that Bonneville is supremely confident that this process will work as intended; that the Council plan and the needs laid out in the BiOp will mesh seamlessly. Joking aside, he said, the feeling at Bonneville is that there is going to be some default caps on how much can be spent in critical and near-critical water years. We don't know what that cap will be, at this point, although we do expect that annual spending on fish and wildlife will increase in all but critical and near-critical years, Daley said.

In response to a question from Litchfield, Brown said both NMFS and the federal action agencies will retain the discretion to fund items that have not been recommended by the Council and CBFWA if they feel they are necessary to meet their BiOp responsibilities.

In response to a question, Brown said that, while the BiOp has now been signed, the action agencies have not yet signed the Record of Decision. Jim Athearn said the ROD will be

signed this year; until it is, he said, we are not taking any actions that could lead to a jeopardy situation.

Moving on to performance standards, Brown said there are three different types of performance standards described in the BiOp: programmatic standards, biological standards and physical standards – flow, water quality etc. There is an expectation that the third category will include tributary habitat standards, he added. These standards are linked to Section 9.5, which describes the three-, five- and eight-year check-in points, Brown said (please refer to Pages 9-43 to 9-49 of Enclosure E for details). He also touched on the annual population growth rate and abundance tests associated with the three-, five- and eight-year check-ins (Pages 9-9 to 9-11 of Enclosure E).

How will performance standards be incorporated into the one- and five-year plans, specifically, the Water Management Plan? Nielsen asked. I wouldn't anticipate that they would be, Brown replied; there will be annual progress reports, and the performance standards will also be addressed during the three- five- and eight-year check-in points. You may want to refer to the applicable standards in the Water Management Plan, but you don't necessarily need to incorporate them.

In response to a question from Lovelin, Brown said that, in all likelihood, the only thing that could cause NMFS to issue a "red zone" ruling at the three-year check-in point is failure to implement the measures called for in the BiOp.

How will water quality variances be obtained? Nielsen asked. That is laid out on Page 9-21 (of Enclosure E), Ruff replied – basically, NMFS' perspective is that the Corps will seek the necessary variances, with NMFS providing any technical assistance needed to get that done.

### ***5. Discussion of Power Planning Council's 2000 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.***

Northwest Power Planning Council Fish and Wildlife Director Bob Lohn provided an overview of the hydro portions of the Council's new Fish and Wildlife program; he distributed Enclosure F, an extract of the relevant portions of the program.

Lohn said the Council has just adopted its new Fish and Wildlife Program; it represents a considerable departure from past programs. What the Council has tried to do is describe objectives and outcomes, set basin-level sideboards, and give people maximum freedom in how the appropriate measures are implemented, Lohn explained.

The goals set for fish include abundance for harvest; the goals for artificial production are less prescriptive, and vary by stock and basin, he continued. The Council envisions that there will be subsequent plans for habitat, harvest and artificial production, said Lohn. We're talking about how the subbasin plans will be developed, as well as the overarching structure under which



they will be developed and implemented. The subbasin plans will come in at six-month intervals over the next three years; the Council will then have one year to respond.

The next question is what to do in the mainstem and other areas that don't fit well with the basin, subbasin and province-level planning processes, Lohn continued. You have already gone through the rolling review of the first three subbasins, said Ruff – what are the next three basins that will be reviewed? Lynn Krasnow replied that work on the Intermountain and Gorge provinces are now completed; work on the Intermountain Columbia province is nearly complete. The Columbia Plateau province is in the middle of its subbasin summary development process, and the Mountain Snake province is next, Krasnow said.

With respect to the mainstem, said Lohn, it should be noted that, while it didn't fit in well with the subbasin planning process, it needs an overarching coordination mechanism. The Council is developing a mainstem coordination plan; it will take that plan up later this year with the goal of completing its rulemaking in October 2001. How does this fit with the NMFS BiOp, and does the BiOp make this redundant? Lohn asked. We don't believe so; there still may be a number of areas where coordination with other entities is possible, for example, to promote cost savings while achieving the same goals. We contemplate the creation of a mainstem coordination plan, said Lohn, laying out both the underlying reasons for what we're doing, and the costs, both financial costs and costs to resident fish and wildlife.

Lohn then spent a few minutes going through the "Hydrosystem Passage and Operations" section of the Council's newly-adopted Fish and Wildlife Program (Enclosure F); please refer to this document for details of Lohn's presentation.

The group discussed the reporting requirements included in the new Fish and Wildlife Plan, in particular, the Council's requirement that, when certain discretionary actions are taken, such as decisions about providing flows for chum, for example, the action agencies provide a written report laying out the effects of the actions taken on both fish and hydrosystem operations. The Council would also like to see a cost-benefit component to these reports. Lohn noted that this provision does not apply to non-discretionary Biological Opinion requirements. The Council's intention is to ensure, first of all, that the TMT has all of this information in front of them, said Lohn. If one of these actions has a potential impact on, say, power system reliability, would the Council take action? Litchfield asked. The Council has left that question open, Lohn replied; such action is within the realm of possibility, in cases where the Council decides that the risks to fish or the power system are greater than the potential benefits.

Michael Newsom said the same information exchange function could be accomplished by having the Council send a representative to the TMT meetings. The concern is documentation, Lohn replied. Is this provision in effect now? Lovelin asked. Basically, yes, although it may take some time to phase this measure in, Lohn replied -- certainly it is our intention that this provision will apply within the next month or two.

Does this requirement apply to all operations? Nielsen asked. It applies to all in-season operational changes in which there is discretion, whether or not they're in the Biological Opinion, Lohn replied. The group spent a few minutes discussing the specific types of actions to which this provision would apply; Ruff observed that there appears to be some confusion, among the parties at the table, about what exactly the Council means by "discretionary." Lohn suggested that it may make sense for the TMT to sit down with a Council representative to discuss the actions for which a written report to the Council would be required.

Moving on, Lohn touched on the provision that requires Bonneville, in consultation with NMFS, to prepare an annual report, based on scientific research, documenting the flow augmentation actions taken, the benefits of flow augmentation for fish survival, and the precise attributes of flow that may make it beneficial. The Council is also requesting that each year, prior to March 1, the in-season management participants prepare and make available to the Council and to the public an annual operating plan.

What about the Council's interest in co-sponsoring the IT and TMT processes? Palensky asked. Prior to the Regional Forum process, there was the joint Council-Federal Fish Operations Executive Committee, Lohn observed; the Council has no desire to start a competing process, but does want to ensure that policy-level discussion takes place on some of the key questions. Beyond that, he said, I can't tell you what the Council's intention is; we need to have some additional discussion with NMFS and others. Lohn said he will try to discuss this issue with the Council members to obtain some additional clarity, and will report back at a future IT meeting.

#### ***6. Progress Report on Action Agencies' 1- and 5-Year Implementation Plans.***

Daley distributed Enclosure G, the revised timeline for the development of implementation plans. He went briefly through this document; the bottom line is that the action agencies expect to release their initial one- and five-year implementation plans on April 2, with NMFS and the Fish and Wildlife Service expected to issue their findings letter on October 15. He added that the action agencies have submitted an implementation plan outline to NMFS, and will release this outline to other interested parties for comment by the end of this month. We want to be sure we're headed in the right direction, Daley said; the hope is that this will also provide some guidance to others in the region. What we really want is a template that can be used to develop these implementation plans year after year, he said.

#### ***7. Review of "High Priority Projects" Under the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.***

Palensky said that, for the IT's information, the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program calls for the submission of high-priority projects, with the recognition that, given the three-year rolling review timeline, without this supplemental funding process, it might be difficult to consider some of the high-priority projects called for in the BiOp. That solicitation closed December 15, said Palensky, six days before the final BiOp was signed; under that solicitation, they received 94 project proposals, the total cost of which was \$134 million. These proposals

run the gamut, said Palensky; many comport with the activities identified in the BiOp, while others do not. In terms of schedule, the ISRP is reviewing these projects now, as is CBFWA; all recommendations are due to the Council by February 1. The Council will make its recommendation on these high-priority projects on March 6.

Palensky noted that there are a number of high-priority actions identified in the BiOp for which no proposals were submitted. NMFS wants those activities to start right away, he said, and we need to work out with the Council how to get those items funded and underway as soon as possible. NMFS is participating in the CBFWA review process, Palensky said; our plan is to join in the CBFWA recommendations to the Council. We are reserving the right to go directly to the Council and to BPA if necessary, he reiterated. Anyone interested in looking at those proposals can access them via the CBFWA website, he added.

What is the budget for these high-priority projects? Lovelin asked. The Council recommended that Bonneville spend \$15 million, Daley replied, adding that Bonneville will insist that whatever list of projects is submitted for funding be prioritized.

#### ***8. Membership in IT.***

Silverberg noted that there is a sense abroad that the IT isn't always the best place to get things resolved. The problem is that, in many cases, the people who are involved in the discussion of issues at the technical level are then changing hats and deciding how those issues should be resolved at the IT, she said. I would also observe that, given our last agenda item, we have expanded the scope of the IT to include water quality, said Ruff. You will recall that, earlier, we started to discuss the IT guidelines to see what changes may be necessary, both because of our experience and because of the changes in the BiOp, said Palensky. We need to conclude that review of the Guidelines before too much time has passed; we can probably discuss IT membership at that time. The Council is also talking, in its new Fish and Wildlife Plan, about possible joint NMFS/Council IT sponsorship, he said.

Brown noted that Washington, in particular, is concerned that their coordination needs are not being fully met through the existing Regional Forum processes. Dan Daley observed that this is an idiosyncrasy common to other forums as well, notably the Council process. One way that has been resolved in the past is through an executive forum, he said, although there are challenges associated with that process as well, notably tribal participation and simply coordinating executive schedules. Obviously, said Nielsen, there is a difference of opinion among the various participating entities, and in Washington's case, within the state itself. There are also problems associated with resolving the differences between the federal agencies in trying to come to this forum with a single voice said Brown – it would be helpful if other entities, such as the states, could make more of an effort to achieve such a single voice. It would be very useful, in my view, if we could make an effort to resolve this in the coming year, said Daley – perhaps we could ask each of the state entities to explore the possibility of designating someone who could come to these meetings and speak with a unified voice for the entire state.

I'm willing to go back to Montana and raise this issue, said Litchfield; is everyone else going to do the same? Nielsen and Yost said they will check with Washington and Idaho, respectively, to ensure that all of their states' interests are being adequately represented in this forum. This issue will then be discussed further at the February IT meeting.

***9. Next IT Meeting Date.***

It was agreed to begin holding the IT meetings on the first Thursday of every month, beginning Thursday, February 1 and Thursday, March 1. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.